DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 265 421 CG 018 743

AUTHOR Brown, Duane
TITLE Theories of Career Development and the Practice Career Counseling: Will They Ever Get Together?
PUB DATE 3 Apr 85
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Association for Counseling and Development (New York, NY, April 2-5, 1985).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Counseling; *Career Development; *Career Guidance; College Students; *Counseling Theories; *Counselor Training; Higher Education

ABSTRACT

Career development and vocational choice theories have been criticized as inaccurate and not useful as models for the practice of career counseling. It may be that theorists have not extended their theories into practice concepts, since current literature is lacking in attempts to relate theory to practice. Because of this void in theory-practice information, practitioners have relied on personal-intuitive and traditional trait-and-factor approaches. Career development and vocational choice theory and its applications should be taught to students of career counseling. Career counselors should work to generate better theories. Practitioners and students need to consult theory to enact eclectic approaches to career counseling. Students must examine their concepts of work, motivation, and development. An eclectic theory of career development and a counseling approach can be generated that would enable practitioners to provide remedial assistance when needed and to assist clients in: (1) making initial career choices; (2) making career change choices; (3) developing career adjustment strategies; and (4) identifying the role of work in their lives. A three-page list of references concludes the paper.

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED265421

Theories of Career Development and the Practice

Career Counseling: Will They Ever Get Together?

Duane Brown

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Duane Brown

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CG018743

A paper presented at the American Association for Counseling and Development, New York, April 3, 1985

Appreciation is expressed to Linda Brooks for her thoughtful comments regarding this paper.

Introduction

During the past 25 years it has been fashionable to criticize career development and vocational choice theories. Criticisms have focused on the failure of theorists to adhere to the principles of theory building and the resulting philosophical and logical flaws (Carkhuff, Alexik, & Anderson, 1967), the failure of theorists to take into consideration the lack of opportunity for self actualization in many current day jobs (Warnath, 1975), the inadequacy of theories when it comes to accounting for the non-rational aspects of career decision making and the resulting situation that we are unable to predict career choices with accuracy (Baumgardner, 1977), and the failure of theories to adequately consider the unique variables associated with the career development of minorities and women (Brooks, 1984; Brown, 1984b; Fitzgerald & Crites, 1980; Osipow, 1975). Taken collectively these criticisms could lead to the conclusion that our current theories are (A) worthless and should be discarded; (B) only good for generating the esoteric research that professors pursue in order to get promoted; or (C) badly flawed and in need of continued scrutiny and revision but can be helpful guides to both research and practice. I choose C.

Except for the most extreme critics of career development and vocational choice theories, most have taken the stand that discarding our current theoretical statements would be equivalent to throwing out the proverbial baby with the bath water. For example, Fitzgerald and Crites (1980) have suggested that current theories do provide concepts that can be useful in providing career counseling for both men and women. Crites (1981) has taken an additional step. He has provided a detailed outline of how each theory can be

applied in career counseling. More recently Brown and Brooks (1984) have asked the leading career development theorists not only to present their current thinking about their theories, but to discuss the implications of their theories for practice. Not a single theorist suggested that his or her theory has no relevance for practice. Brooks (1984) summarized the practical implications presented by these theorists and concluded that while additional empirical research was needed to validate many of the counseling techniques suggested, theories provide a rich source of information for practitioners. She did not conclude that any of the current theories taken individually provide an adequate basis for underpinning the career counseling process, however.

It may very well be that, contrary to what we see in the personal counseling realm, career development theories do not provide the basis for the development of a full blown model of career counseling and, realizing this, practitioners have not based their practice upon them. It may also be that, except for trait-and-factor theory, none of the existing theories has been adequately extended to provide a model for counseling, although, as noted, Crites (1981) has certainly attempted to do so. It is also the case that few existing texts give detailed descriptions of the application of the tenets of career development theories to practice even when extensions have been made. For example, Osipow (1983) makes only some general comments about the implication of the various theories to practice and, while Brown and Brooks (1984) attempted to bridge this gap between theory and practice, they have probably fallen short of their goal. Other current textbooks (e.g. Herr & Cramer, 1984; Isaacson, 1977) make little attempt to relate theory to practice.

The results of the skepticism about career development theories generally, the admitted inadequacy of our current theories to provide the basis for a career counseling model, and the lack of attention to the relationship between theory and practice has been the continued reliance upon traditional trait-and-factor approaches (as opposed to contemporary views) (Brown, 1984a; Srebalus, Marinelli, & Messing, 1982) and the adoption of personal-intuitive approaches. These personal-intuitive approaches are often termed eclectic but meet none of the criteria for that label (c.f. Brabeck & Welfel, 1985; Patterson, 1985).

If the foregoing is an accurate characterization of the state of career counseling, and I believe that it is, criticisms of the process such as those levied by Baumgardner (1977), Menacker (1975) and others may be justified, but not precisely for the reasons stated. Current career development theories can provide the basis for career counseling (we believe) if they are properly translated and applied.

Before I pursue the foregoing point let us elaborate on why I believe that neither the traditional trait-and-factor nor the personal-intuitive approaches provide an adequate basis for career counseling. Sonnefeld and Kotter (1982) have neatly summarized the criticisms of traditional trait-and-factor thinking. These criticisms are that (1) adherents of this perspective hold the view that traits are static; (2) their view of the occupational environment is overly simplistic and fail to recognize that many types of people can function effectively in a particular occupational role, and (3) there is a failure to recognize that developmental changes occur as individuals mature. Interestingly, even Parsons (1909) would not have agreed with the currently held view of many so-called trait-and-factor adherents, and

certainly contemporary trait-and-factor practitioners do not. Traits are learned and thus can change as the individual interacts with his or her environment and the earlier ideas that there was one best job has been supplanted by the realization individuals are suited for a variety of occupations (Brown, 1984a). Thus current trait-and-factor thinking more closely approximates our present understanding of the career choice and development process although it has not been clearly articulated for the most part.

Osipow (1983) has provided a succinct criticism of the personal-intuitive approach to career counseling. He notes that these counselors tend to be less systematic in their counseling and may be hard pressed to explain why they perform in a particular fashion and borrow counseling techniques from different perspectives. The danger in this particular approach is that these counselors may mistime the use of the techniques and therefore effectively destroy their utility. For example, a career counselor might utilize decision making training as a technique while ignoring the importance of self efficacy beliefs in the career decision making process (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1984).

Remedying the Current Situation

It will come as no surprise that my first recommendation is that career development and vocational choice theory and its applications need to be stressed in the training of career counselors. I join good company when I make this recommendation (Crites, 1981; Osipow, 1983). Conversely, I disagree with Herr (1977) when he suggests that theories of vocational choice and intervention in the career development process are not directly related, although we would admit that many of the theories were not developed to provide a basis for intervention. The fact is that many of the current

theories either implicitly or explicitly suggest how remedial action can be taken whenever problems in the process arise. Even Holland, who has been criticized for his lack of attention to remediation of vocational choice making difficulties, has attempted to respond to this point in his latest theoretical statement (Holland, 1984).

A second recommendation is that career counselors must continue to work to generate better theories. Certainly those persons that we would characterize as major theorists have continued to embellish their thinking (c.f. Brown and Brooks, 1984). Others, such as Hackett and Betz (1981) and Astin (1984) have presented less well known but important theoretical statements in recent years. Osipow (1983) correctly observed that theory is instrumental in focusing a field and its knowledge generation. However, theory in the absence of an empirical base, can focus practice as well (Stefflre & Grant, 1972).

Third and finally, no current theory adequately provides either an explanatory system for occupational choice making or career development in the natural environment or a system for intervening in the process (Osipow, 1983; Parkinson, Bradley, & Lawson, 1979). Students and practitioners alike must be taught to draw upon current theory and build adequate eclectic approaches to career counseling. I agree with Patterson (1985) that many of the current eclectic systems of counseling are in fact poorly done because they do not grow out of a carefully conceived framework. He goes on to suggest that our knowledge about the therapeutic relationships may be the most relevant point of departure for building eclectic systems of counseling. While I have no particular argument with Patterson's view I would suggest that the basis for building an eclectic system of career counseling needs to have a broader

foundation and might include (1) assumptions about the importance of work in human functioning, (2) assumptions about clients such as sources of motivation, (3) the impact of person-environment interaction on growth and change, and of course, (4) assumptions about the nature of the counseling process.

Assumptions regarding the role of work may range from work being the primary life role for all, to it being a secondary or tertiary role for most. Since gainful employment is the means by which clothing, food, and shelter needs are met, most of our clients must work. Therefore, the key issue regarding work appears to be whether it meets high order needs, is the source of self actualization, or, if you prefer, is the primary source of societal recognition. If a career counselor assumes that it does not meet higher order needs, career counseling would be focused quite differently than if the assumptions are to the contrary.

Assumptions about persons certainly must begin with basic philosophical arguments regarding the relative goodness, badness, or neutrality of human beings. Basic hypotheses about motivation, growth and development should then be drawn that do not conflict with these philosophical underpinnings. Personality theory along with developmental psychology could be tapped as the basis for these hypotheses.

Once students have examined their assumptions about work, motivation, and development these assumptions could be used as a backdrop for examining theories of career development. The question to be answered is of course to what extent do current theories meet the assumptions that I have about work and human beings? It is perfectly conceivable that a student might conclude, as many critics already appear to have done, that none of the current theories

adequately provides an explanatory system that is robust enough to account for initial occupational choice or the myriad of implicit and explicit choices that follow. However, as I have concluded elsewhere (Brown 1984b), it is equally conceivable that students might integrate Holland's (1984) ideas about occupational choice with some of Roe's (1984) or Bordin's (1984) hypotheses and a more comprehensive system might result. Similarly, Holland's ideas might well be integrated into Super's (1984) theory in order to provide a more satisfactory explanation of occupational choice making. Other amalgamations are possible.

Once an eclectic theory of career choice and development has been constructed then the students must turn to the application of these ideas within the counseling process. In order to accomplish this, students must (1) revisit their ideas about human motivation and development, and (2) match these with the underlying assumption of existing counseling theory. Cognitive-behavioral approaches could obviously be used if the student adopts Krumboltz's theory of career choice in toto. However, this matching process will be a bit more difficult if Krumboltz's theory (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1984) is integrated with trait-and-factory thinking.

The culmination of the process just described would be that students would generate an eclectic theory of career development and a counseling approach that would enable them to (1) assist clients to make initial occupational choices, (2) career change choices, (3) develop career adjustment strategies, (4) identify the role of work in their life and its relativity to other life roles, and (5) provide remedial assistance whenever problems arise in the process.

Finally, students must be warned about the dangers of dogma once systems are developed. As Brabeck and Welfel (1985) suggest the value of continuously

contrasting one's own beliefs against empirical findings must be stressed. If this value is adopted by students the eclectic model developed by the practitioners will be in dynamic interaction with the empirical data generated by the researcher and thus be evolving over time. It is certainly possible that a theory of career development may emerge that accounts fully for the developmental and decision making processes and suggests the basis for intervening in these processes. Until that time students must be taught to build systems that draw upon the best current thinking has to offer.

References

Astin, H. S. (1984). The meaning of work in women's lives: A sociopsychological model of career choice and work behaviors. The Counseling Psychologist, 12(4), 117-133.

Baumgardner, S. R. (1977). Vocational planning: The great swindle. The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 56(1), 17-22.

Bordin, E. S. (1984). Psychodynamic model of career choice and development. In Brown, D., & Brooks, L. (Eds.) Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice. (pp. 94-130) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brabeck, M. M. & Welfel, E. R. (1985). Counseling theory; Understanding the trend toward eclecticism from a developmental perspective. Journal of Counseling and Development, 63(6), 343-348.

Brooks, L. (1984). Career counseling methods and practice. In Brown D., & Brooks, L. Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice. (pp. 337-354) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brown, D. (1984). Trait and factor theory. In Brown, D. & Brooks, L. (Eds.) Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice. (pp. 8-30) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brown, D. (1984). Summary, comparison and critique of major theories. In Brown, D. & Brooks, L. (Eds.) Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice. (pp. 311-336) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brown, D. & Brooks, L. (Eds.), (1984). Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Carkhuff, R. R., Alexik, M. & Anderson, S. (1967). Do we have a theory of

vocational choice. The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 46, 335-345.

Crites, J. O. (1981). Career counseling: Models, methods, and materials. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Fitzgerald, L. F., 7 Crites, J. O. (1980). Toward a career psychology of women: What do we know? What do we need to know? Journal of Counseling Psychology, 27, 44-62.

Hackett, G., & Betz, N. E. (1981). A self-efficacy approach to career development of women. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 18, 326-339.

Herr, E. L. (1977). Vocational planning: An alternate view. The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 56(1), 25-27.

Herr, E. L., & Cramer, S. H. (1984). Career guidance and counseling through the life span: Systematic approaches. (2nd ed.) Boston, Little, Brown & Co.

Holland, J. L. (1984). Making vocational choices: A theory of careers. (2nd ed.) Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Isaacson, L. E. (1977). Career information in counseling and teaching. (3rd ed.) Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Menacker, J. (1975). Inequality: Implications for career guidance. Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 23, 243-249.

Mitchell, L. K., & Krumboltz, J. D. (1984). Social learning approach to career decision making: Krumboltz's theory. In Brown, D., & Brooks, L. (Eds.) Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice. (pp. 235-280) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Osipow, S. H. (1975). The relevance of theories of career development to special groups: Problems, needed data and implication. In Picou, J. S. & Campbell, R. E. (Eds.) Career behavior of special groups. Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Osipow, S. H. (1983). Theories of career development. (3rd ed.) Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Parsons, F. (1909). Choosing a vocation. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Parkinson, T., Bradley, R., & Lawson, G. (1979). Career counseling revisited. Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 28, (2), 121-128.

Roe, A. (1984). Personality development and career choice. In Brown, D., & Brooks, L. (Eds.) Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice. (pp. 31-53) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sonnenfeld, J., & Kotter, J. P. (1982). The maturation of career theory. Human Relations, 35(1), 19-46.

Srebalus, D. J., Marinelli, R. P., & Messing, J. L. (1982). Career development: Concepts and procedures. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Stefflre, B., & Grant, W. H. (eds.) Theories of counseling. (2nd ed.) New York: McGraw Hill.

Super, D. E. (1984). Career and life development. In Brown, D., & Brooks, L. (Eds.) Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice. (pp. 192-234) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Warnath, C. (1975). Vocational theories: Directions to nowhere. The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 53, 422-428.

Williamson, E. G. (1939). How to counsel students. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Williamson, E. G. (1965). Vocational counseling. New York: McGraw-Hill.